



Representative
Gary Chandler
13TH DISTRICT



1997 Session Report

Serving Kittitas • Yakima • Grant • and Benton counties



Summer 1997

Dear friends,

The 1997 legislative session has concluded, and I'm back in my district office in Moses Lake. I think you should know we accomplished many good things this year for the people of Washington state, including historic reforms of the welfare and juvenile justice systems. We also adjourned on time — a remarkable feat given that the last time the Legislature concluded its work in a budget year was 1957! Inside this newsletter are some of the highlights from this session.

In addition to giving you an overview of the 1997 legislation, I want you to know I'm here to help you and answer any questions you may have about state government. As your 13th District state representative, I want to:

- Help if you are having a problem with a state agency
- Answer questions you may have about legislation or functions of state government
- Listen to your ideas for legislation — most bills originate with ideas from the people
- Arrange for you to testify during session about a bill of interest

Between now and the 1998 legislative session, I can be reached at the district office. My legislative assistant, Marge Plumage, is also available to help answer questions or schedule an appointment with me.

I want to thank everyone who contacted my office during the session. I realize winter driving conditions prevented many of you from making the trip to Olympia, but your calls and letters were taken with interest. I value your input because it helps me better represent your concerns west of the Cascades. Please feel free to write, call or stop by the office just to visit. It's great to be back home in the 13th District.

Sincerely,


Gary Chandler

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Transportation Policy and Budget
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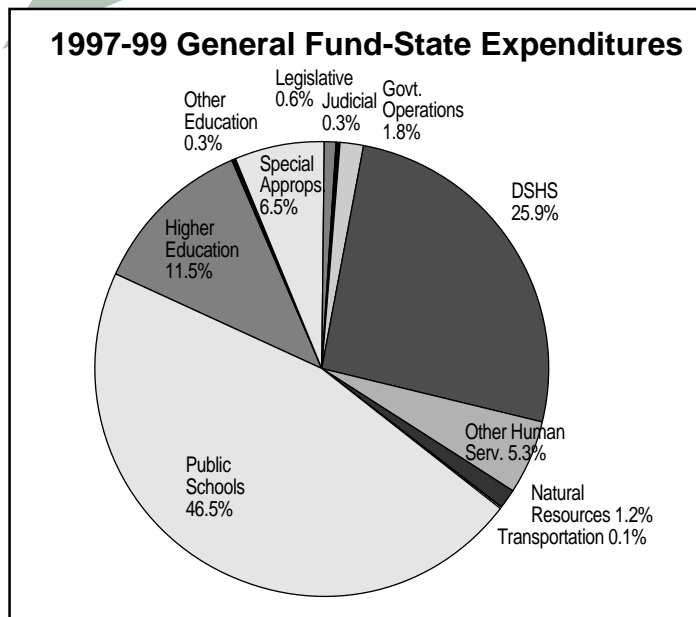
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State budget



Our final state operating budget also reflects a commitment to reduce the size and cost of government. With total spending of \$19.073 billion over the next two years, the 1997-99 biennial budget represents a 7.7 percent increase over the current level — the smallest growth in 26 years. We also kept spending more than \$112 million below the limit established by Initiative 601, ensuring the budget will be kept under control now and in the future.

We made education a top priority during this year's budget negotiations. As a result, funding for K-12 education was enhanced by \$288 billion. That means the average classroom teacher will receive \$458 for instructional materials which so often have to be paid for out of a teacher's personal funds. Significant funding is provided for computers and other high technology classroom aids; learning improvement in reading, writing, math and communications; magnet schools and complex need programs; and alternative educational opportunities for students who have dropped out of school. Continued emphasis will be on local control and accountability through assessment testing of children to ensure they are receiving a good education and retaining what they learn.

The Legislature also sought ways to enhance our higher education system. We increased financial aid for needy students by \$32 million and, at the same time, increased enrollment numbers by 6,390 — 2,190 slots for our state's four-year colleges and universities; 4,200 slots for our community colleges

and technical schools. Central Washington University's enrollment was expanded by 190 student slots. The increase in enrollment numbers for Big Bend Community College have not yet been decided by the state's board of community college and technical schools.

I should also note the capital budget was kind to Central, too. It contains \$14.696 million for improvements, construction and preservation projects on the main campus in Ellensburg.

Welfare reform

This year, the Legislature enacted sweeping changes to the welfare system in Washington state, and Gov. Gary Locke signed those changes into law on April 17. Our new welfare reform law eliminates the entitlement status of welfare. The old system allowed individuals to collect taxpayer-financed welfare checks indefinitely. Our new system requires applicants to work or perform activities in preparation for employment in exchange for state financial support. This new system provides both incentives and assistance to help people become productive and will enable them to support themselves and their families.

People who find work will still be able to collect welfare cash grants as they advance up the ladder of self-sufficiency. The state will also help them by providing an improved level of child care as they move toward total independence. Those unable to find a job will be assessed to determine why they cannot find employment. The state will then provide job training or work-search training and child care to help them land a job.

Teen parents will be required to live with a parent or other responsible adult and to finish their education. And to help single parents stay off welfare, the new law requires non-custodial parents to pay court-ordered child support or risk losing their driver's license and/or other professional licenses.

Juvenile justice reform

The Legislature worked this session to produce the most significant juvenile justice reform measure in 20 years. Our current juvenile system, adopted in 1977, is antiquated and no longer serves as a deterrent.

Under HB 3900, 16- and 17-year-olds will automatically be tried and punished in the adult system if they commit a drive-by shooting, first-degree robbery and child rape, first-degree burglary with a previous conviction, and any crime in which the offender was armed with a firearm. Republicans and Democrats alike agreed with the provisions of this mea-



sure. These reforms are designed to reduce juvenile crime, which has increased dramatically while other crime rates have decreased. In addition, HB 3900 ensures a juvenile's criminal record is considered if he or she commits crimes as an adult, and will count toward the "Three Strikes You're Out" law.



Rep. Chandler confers with House Majority Leader Barb Lisk, R-Zillah, during debate on the House floor.

Our reform plan also provides greater flexibility for prosecutors and judges to deal with juvenile offenders so that every youngster who breaks the law receives an appropriate combination of punishment and/or rehabilitation. Alternative sentencing options are encouraged, including boot camps, home detention, mandatory alcohol and drug treatment and community service. Our plan has a clear intent: Make young people understand there will be serious consequences for their actions, and those actions will receive the appropriate sentence — be it punishment or rehabilitation.

Growth Management Act

Despite a concerted, bipartisan effort to make the state's Growth Management Act more "user friendly," Gov. Locke vetoed our bill to restore local control to GMA planning. ESB 6094 would have expanded agriculture's representation on the unelected Growth Hearings Boards, improved public participation in the growth management process, given local entities greater say in planning decisions, and allowed each of the 30 counties currently planning under GMA standards to decide what growth guidelines best fit their county's needs.

I was very disappointed in the governor's veto of this bill because it was our best chance this session to relieve counties and cities of the current "one-size-fits-all" approach to growth planning. Washington is a unique state, and we should plan for the coming growth by taking that uniqueness into consideration. That requires local input, something the governor said he supported, then vetoed out of the bill. I will continue to work on this issue in the interim.

Transportation budget

The Legislature approved a \$3.3 billion two-year transportation spending plan this session. It is a bare-bones budget that does not include a gas tax increase. As a member of the House Transportation Policy and Budget Committee, it was difficult to support a budget that I knew could be detrimental not only to the state's highway infrastructure, but to its economic viability as well.

I share concerns over the efficient use of our tax dollars, and worked with the committee to identify nearly \$200 million in efficiencies and cost savings in the 1997-99 budget. I also voted to include a \$1.5 million performance audit of the state Department of Transportation, the State Patrol, and the Department of Licensing. These savings are important, but I fear they may not be enough to cover the cost of serious transportation improvements, given the projected 20-year population increase for our state.

Transportation is a serious issue for the people of the 13th District. Our area is very dependent on our roads and highways not only for recreational travel, but for business, too. Our ability to get goods and services, including crops and livestock, to and from major points of commerce is crucial to our economic well-being. The same can be said for our rail lines and airports. Quality transportation systems are some of the most influential factors in economic development. I hope to continue working on the issue of transportation funding during the interim.

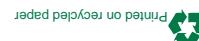


Water issues

This year could have been a remarkable year for water legislation but for Gov. Locke's vetoes of the key water bills approved by the Legislature. With a bipartisan effort this session and hundreds of meetings and debates, I felt the bills we presented this year had the best chance of winning approval because they reflected a consensus of all the key players in water resource management. My bills favored planning efforts at the local level, taking a bottom-up, grass-roots approach. The governor's newly appointed Joint Natural Resources Cabinet does not contain a single citizen or state representative; only state elected officials and bureaucrats. I wish the governor much patience in his search for a solution to our water management problem.

Ephrata, Royal City water projects OK'd!

One of the few water bills the governor did sign was HB 1817, a measure I sponsored creating five pilot programs for reclaimed water uses in Ephrata, Royal City, Sequim, Yelm, and Lincoln County. Reclaimed water, often treated wastewater, can be used for a number of non-potable uses, such as irrigation and recreational projects. This is a very pro-active piece of legislation — something few other states have implemented. Washington is considered a leader in water management with this program. A \$10 million appropriation was included in the capital budget for this project. This is a very cutting-edge program, something I'm glad two cities in our heavily irrigated, agriculturally based district can take part in.



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